

Task Force A Meeting Summary

Monday, August 15, 2005

Participants: Mitch Irwin (Chair) – MI Department of Agriculture, Elaine Brown – Michigan Integrated Food and Farming Systems, Jim Byrum – Michigan Agri-Business Association, Bob Craig – MI Department of Agriculture, Michael DiRamio – Food System Economic Partnership, Jim Herbert – Neogen Corporation, Bill Knudson – MSU Product Center for Agriculture and Natural Resources, Art Loeffler – Star of the West, JoAnn Merrick – MI Department of Environmental Quality, Ron Moffett – Michigan Economic Development Corporation, Terry Morrison – Michigan Food Processors Association, and Irma Zuckerberg – MI Department of Labor and Economic Growth.

Public: Emily Fluery – Executive Office of Governor Granholm and Jean Doss.

The first Task Force A: Expanding Food-Related Businesses and Jobs convened Monday, August 15, 2005 from 2:30pm-4:15pm at Constitution Hall in Lansing. Council Chairperson, Mitch Irwin, chaired the meeting.

Mr. Irwin called the meeting to order at 2:30pm and welcomed the Task Force Participants and public to the first Task Force A Meeting. Those present introduced themselves and described their work. Mr. Irwin stressed the importance of the Michigan Food Policy Council's and the Task Force's work and how it is a priority for Governor Granholm. The Task Force and the Council will be action-oriented and are expected to provide a report of recommendations to the Governor by October 2006.

MFPC staff member, Kristin Brooks, went over the Executive Order goals assigned to Task Force A for research and recommendations to the full Council:

1. Increasing economic activity in Michigan resulting in new and expanded businesses and jobs across all food-related sectors in this state.
2. Strengthening Michigan's urban and rural areas with food-related revitalization projects.
3. Developing recommendations to MDA and the Governor not later than October 1, 2006 to encourage the creation of at least 1,000 new food-related jobs in Michigan.
4. Identifying mechanisms by which Michigan may expand markets for Michigan agricultural products, including, but not limited to, niche markets such as "organically-produced," "pasture-raised," and "sustainably-grown" agricultural products.
5. Recommending approaches that maximize coordination of existing federal, state, and local resources and capture additional federal resources for Michigan.*
6. Make recommendations to MDA on the adoption of policies to advance the goals for the Council in the Order.*

7. Identifying strategies to increase collaboration and communication between state agencies in the delivery of food-related programs and evaluation of collaborative opportunities.*
8. Develop and adopt 6-month, 12-month, and 18-month recommended action plan for achieving the goals of the Council.*

*Assigned to all four Task Forces.

Several participants asked whether investigating ethanol production as a means to increase jobs and support agriculture would be part of the Task Force. Arguments were put forward that diverting millions of bushels of corn from the state's food system to ethanol production each year would have a significant impact on the system's functioning. The group decided to investigate the topic as part of its work.

Task Force participants discussed a framework for organizing their activities to fulfill both the Executive Order goals and objectives assigned to the Task Force and agreed upon the following structure: identifying growing/growth industries, determining obstacles/constraints, and targeting opportunities. At this time: niche markets, fluid milk, beef, wheat/bran, dried fruits/vegetables, and ethanol were identified as growing/growth industries; the state wastewater permitting system and uncertainty over water use regulations were identified as obstacles/constraints; and, streamlining food processing permits, increasing grain production, supporting community and regional food economic development initiatives and enhancing entrepreneurship were identified as target opportunities.

A timeline to reach the activities and objectives was not set during the meeting. Mr. Irwin will report on the Task Force's accomplishments during the second full Council Meeting on Monday, August 22, 2005.

The next Task Force A meeting is scheduled for September 13, 2005 starting at 2:30pm at Constitution Hall, Lansing.